

# Acts 21:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

## Analysis

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**Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar**—The tribune confused Paul with a notorious insurgent who, according to Josephus, led 4,000 sicarii (dagger-men, Jewish assassins) to the Mount of Olives, claiming Jerusalem's walls would fall at his command. The Romans crushed this rebellion, but the Egyptian escaped. The tribune assumed Paul was this wanted terrorist, explaining his large military response.

**Four thousand men that were murderers** (σικαρίων, sikarioi)—These 'dagger-men' mixed in crowds during festivals, assassinating Romans and collaborators. That Lysias thought Paul led such a movement shows how dangerous the situation appeared. Paul's cultured Greek response (v. 37) shocked the tribune, who expected an uneducated revolutionary, not a sophisticated scholar.

## Historical Context

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Josephus (Antiquities 20.8.6, Wars 2.13.5) records this Egyptian false prophet's uprising around AD 54. The sicarii represented violent Jewish nationalism opposing Rome. Felix later encountered these terrorists (Acts 24:1-27). Paul being mistaken for this revolutionary highlights the political tensions in first-century Judea.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How do false assumptions and incomplete information lead to unjust treatment of God's servants?
2. What does Paul's response teach about answering accusations with dignity rather than defensiveness?

## Interlinear Text

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οὐκ ἄρα σὺ εἶ ὁ Αἰγύπτιος ὁ πρὸ τούτων  
**not** <sup>G687</sup> **thou** <sup>G4771</sup> **Art** <sup>G1488</sup> **that Egyptian** <sup>G3588</sup> **which before** <sup>G4253</sup> **these** <sup>G5130</sup>

τῶν ἡμερῶν ἀναστατώσας καὶ ἐξαγαγὼν εἰς τὴν  
<sup>G3588</sup> **days** <sup>G2250</sup> **madest an uproar** <sup>G387</sup> **and** <sup>G2532</sup> **leddest out** <sup>G1806</sup> **into** <sup>G1519</sup> <sup>G3588</sup>

ἔρημον τοὺς τετρακισχιλίους ἄνδρας τῶν  
**the wilderness** <sup>G2048</sup> <sup>G3588</sup> **four thousand** <sup>G5070</sup> **men** <sup>G435</sup> <sup>G3588</sup>

σικαρίων  
**that were murderers** <sup>G4607</sup>

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 24:26** (Parallel theme): Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

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